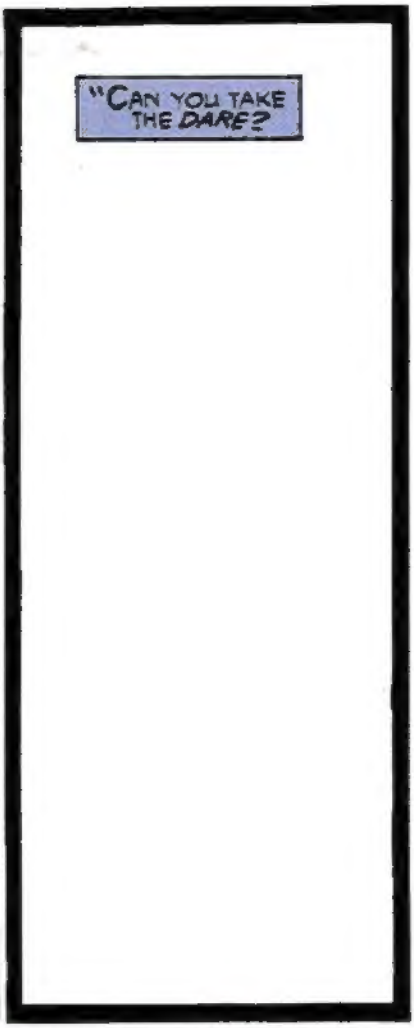
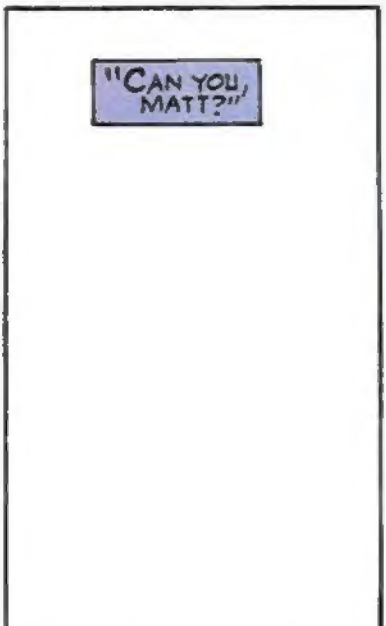
MARVEL
EDGE
FEB·349
DAREDEVIL
THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR!
ASCENT TO MYSTERY
DIRECT EDITION
$1.95 US/ $2.75 CAN

He remembers feeling alive -- in a way he never had before.
The city was alive, too: he could hear every night-sigh, every bellow of rage, every desperate cry of hope.
Catch the scent of an insomniac's three A.M. cigarette. of pooling blood. of shedding tears
...captured the night in the palm of his hand.
All of it -- the pain and the joy, the terrors and the triumphs -- washing over him as he sucked in his breath, made the leap.
But no matter how high he leaped, how far he went, his teacher pushed him higher, farther.



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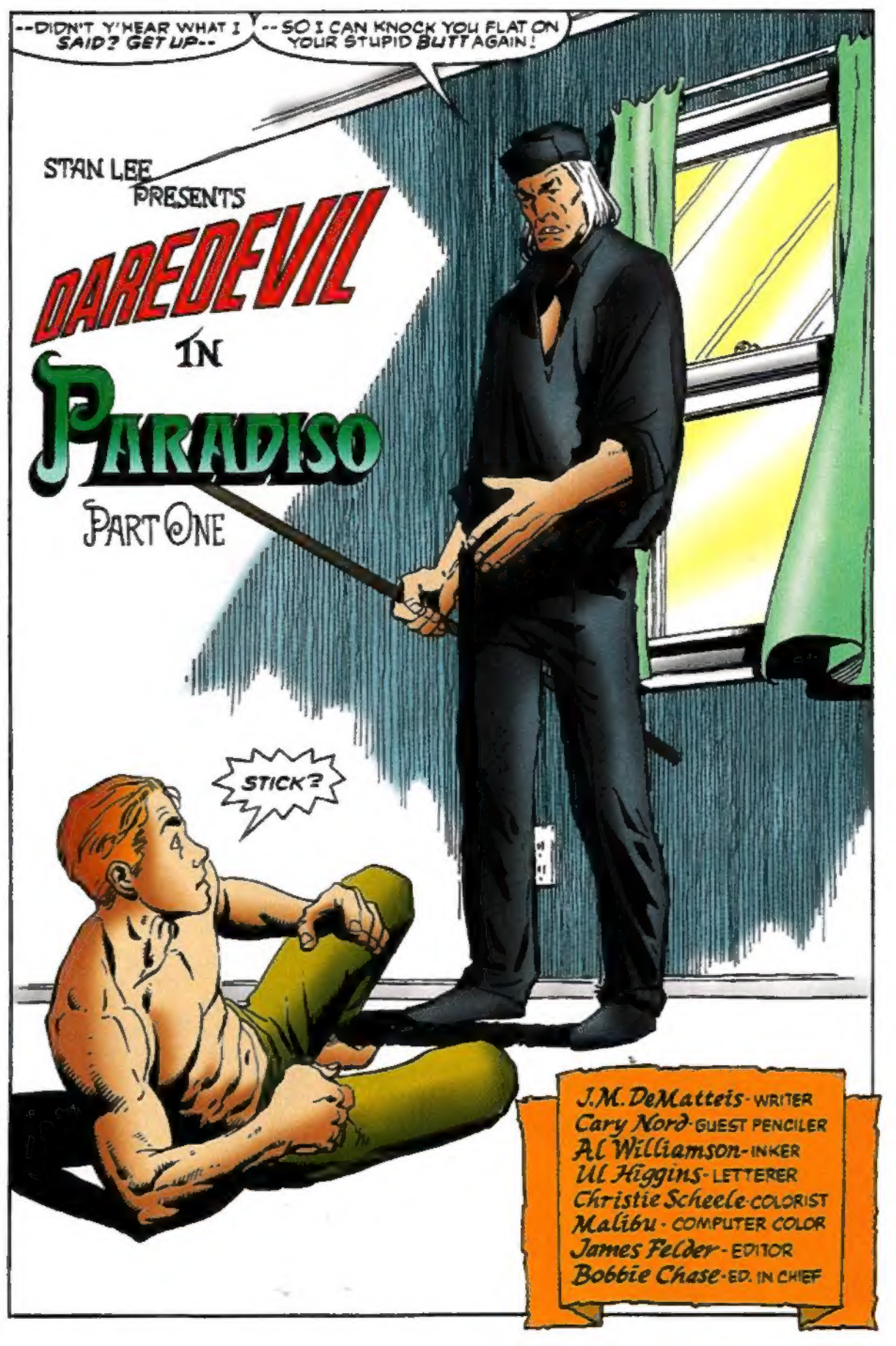
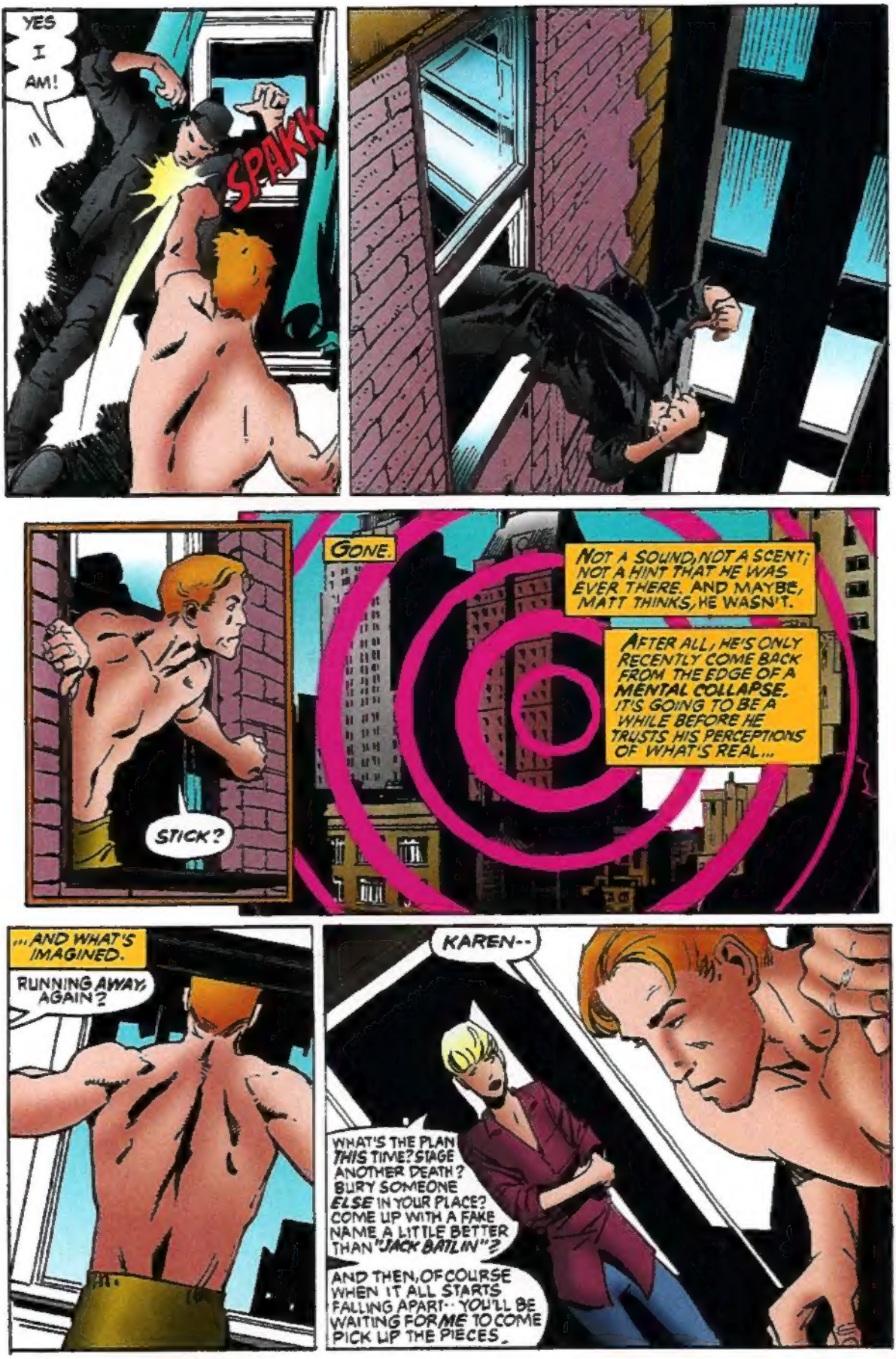
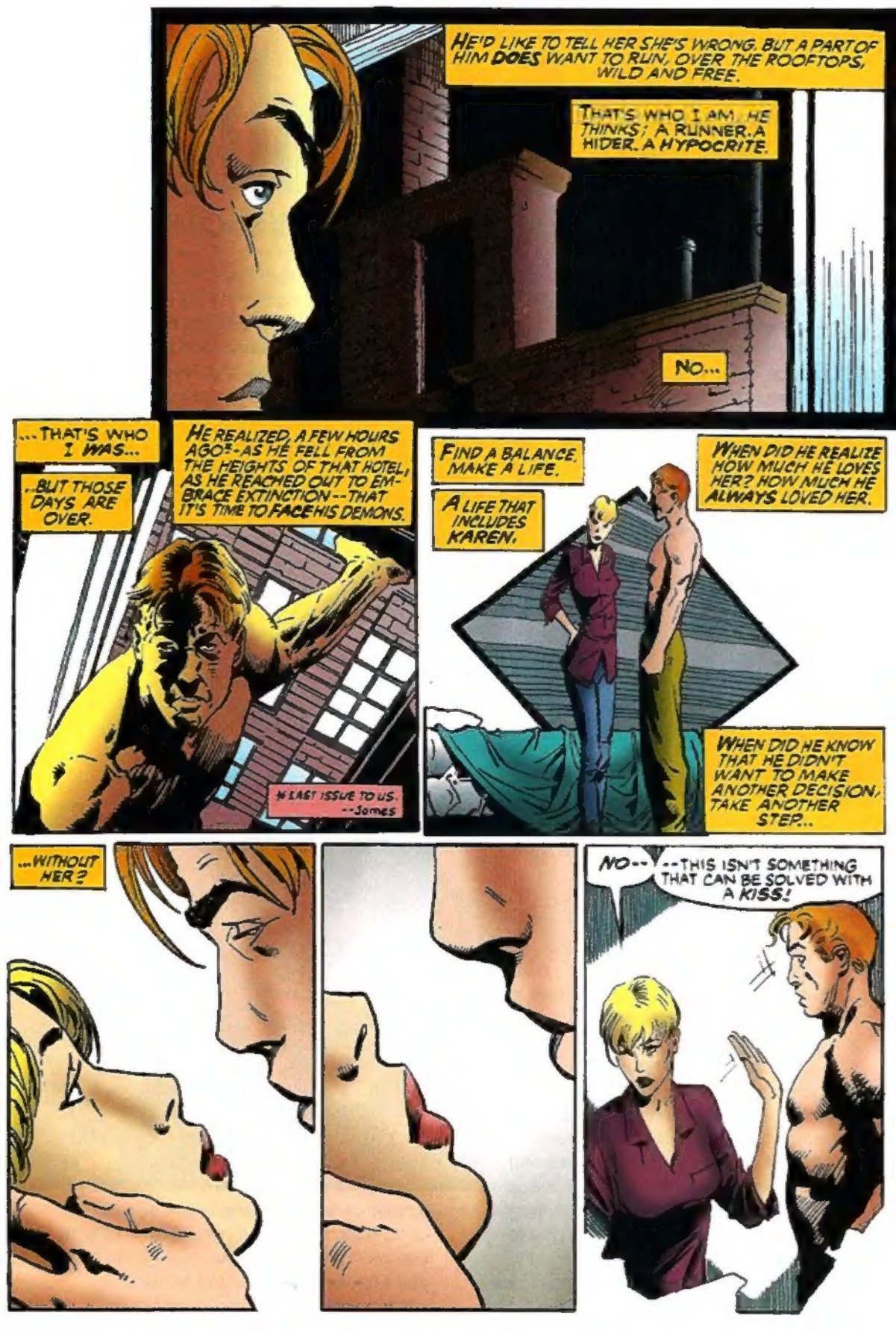

--DIDN'T Y'HEAR WHAT I SAID? GET UP--
-- SO I CAN KNOCK YOU FLAT ON YOUR STUPID BUTT AGAIN!
STAN LEE PRESENTS
DAREDEVIL
IN
PARADISO
PART ONE
STICK?
J.M. DeMatteis - WRITER
Cary Nord - GUEST PENCILER
Al Williamson - INKER
Ul Higgins - LETTERER
Christie Scheele - COLORIST
Malibu - COMPUTER COLOR
James Felder - EDITOR
Bobbie Chase - ED. IN CHIEF

HOW CAN YOU BE HERE? I SAW YOU DIE!*
FUNNY--
* BACK IN DD #190.--Sons.
--I SAW YOU DIE, TOO.
BURIED SIX FEET IN THE GROUND, MATT MURDOCK, R.I.P.
HOW'S IT FEEL T' BE DEAD, KID?
MUST MAKE YOU KINDA NUMB, HUH?
THWAK
NO PLEASURE.
STAKK
NO PAIN.
WELL, C'MON, DEAD MAN--
--DON'T JUST STAND THERE--
TUKK
--SAY SOMETHING! DO SOMETHING!
YEAH, THAT'S BETTER. A LITTLE ANGER IN THOSE BLIND EYES.
GETTIN' TIRED O' BEIN' A PUNCHING BAG, HUH?


YES I AM!
SPAKK
STICK?
GONE.
NOT A SOUND, NOT A SCENT; NOT A HINT THAT HE WAS EVER THERE. AND MAYBE, MATT THINKS, HE WASN'T.
AFTER ALL, HE'S ONLY RECENTLY COME BACK FROM THE EDGE OF A MENTAL COLLAPSE. IT'S GOING TO BE A WHILE BEFORE HE TRUSTS HIS PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT'S REAL...
...AND WHAT'S IMAGINED.
RUNNING AWAY, AGAIN?
KAREN--
WHAT'S THE PLAN THIS TIME? STAGE ANOTHER DEATH? BURY SOMEONE ELSE IN YOUR PLACE? COME UP WITH A FAKE NAME A LITTLE BETTER THAN "JACK BATLIN"?
AND THEN, OF COURSE WHEN IT ALL STARTS FALLING APART-- YOU'LL BE WAITING FOR ME TO COME PICK UP THE PIECES.


HE'D LIKE TO TELL HER SHE'S WRONG. BUT A PART OF HIM DOES WANT TO RUN, OVER THE ROOFTOPS, WILD AND FREE.
THAT'S WHO I AM, HE THINKS; A RUNNER. A HIDER. A HYPOCRITE.
NO...
...THAT'S WHO I WAS...
...BUT THOSE DAYS ARE OVER.
HE REALIZED, A FEW HOURS AGO*--AS HE FELL FROM THE HEIGHTS OF THAT HOTEL, AS HE REACHED OUT TO EMBRACE EXTINCTION--THAT IT'S TIME TO FACE HIS DEMONS.
* LAST ISSUE TO US. --James
FIND A BALANCE. MAKE A LIFE.
A LIFE THAT INCLUDES KAREN.
WHEN DID HE REALIZE HOW MUCH HE LOVES HER? HOW MUCH HE ALWAYS LOVED HER.
WHEN DID HE KNOW THAT HE DIDN'T WANT TO MAKE ANOTHER DECISION, TAKE ANOTHER STEP...
...WITHOUT HER?
NO--
--THIS ISN'T SOMETHING THAT CAN BE SOLVED WITH A KISS!

IT'S NOT LIKE WE HAD A LITTLE LOVER'S QUARREL THAT CAN BE PATCHED UP WITH CANDY AND FLOWERS.
YOU LIED TO ME! YOU WALKED OUT OF MY LIFE, MY WORLD!
YOU LET ME BELIEVE YOU WERE DEAD!
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW I...HOW ALL OF US WHO LOVED YOU...SUFFERED BECAUSE OF THAT?
HOW DARE YOU JUDGE ME? HOW--
NO.
I GUESS I DIDN'T HAVE ANY IDEA. I GUESS I WAS BLIND TO EVERY-THING--
--BUT MY OWN SUFFER-ING.
BUT THE JOKE OF IT ALL IS -- IT DIDN'T WORK. I COULDN'T KILL MATT MURDOCK JUST BY CHANG-ING MY NAME. AND I COULDN'T BURY DAREDEVIL INSIDE A NEW COSTUME. ALL I DID WAS PUSH THE PAST DOWN...PUSH IT AWAY--
--BUT LIFE DOESN'T WORK LIKE THAT. BE-CAUSE THE HARD-ER WE PUSH THE PAIN AWAY...THE HARDER IT COMES ROARING BACK AGAIN.
IT CAME UP LIKE A WAVE, KAREN--
--AND IT ALMOST DROWNED ME.

I KNOW ALL ABOUT FEELING BURIED ALIVE.
SOMETIMES I THINK THAT PART OF BEING HUMAN -- IS DYING INSIDE... AND THEN FINDING THE STRENGTH TO COME BACK AGAIN.
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND -- THE THINGS I'VE DONE... THE DEPTHS I'VE SUNK TO --
COME ON, MATT -- YOU'RE TALKING TO KAREN PAGE... EX-JUNKIE, EX-PORNO STAR. I'LL MATCH YOU DEPTH FOR DEPTH.
FACE IT, IF THERE'S ANYONE ON EARTH YOU CAN TALK TO --
--IT'S ME.
HE WANTS TO TELL HER. EMPTY HIS HEART, CONFESS HIS SINS. BUT EVEN WITH HER... EVEN WITH SOMEONE SO COMFORTING AND FAMILIAR, THERE'S ALWAYS A WALL OF FEAR HE'S NOT SURE HE CAN CLIMB, A PERSONAL ABYSS...
... HE'S NOT SURE HE CAN CROSS.
HIS HYPER-SENSES SCAN THE FIGURE STANDING ACROSS THE WAY! STICK! SO HE WAS THERE. HE WAS REAL!
STICK -- WHOSE VERY PRESENCE TAUNTS MATT... DARES HIM TO LEAVE RESPONSIBILITY -- PROMISES AND TRUST -- BEHIND.
TO TAKE THE LEAP, ACCEPT THE DARE,
AND MAYBE HE WILL.
BUT NOT NOW.

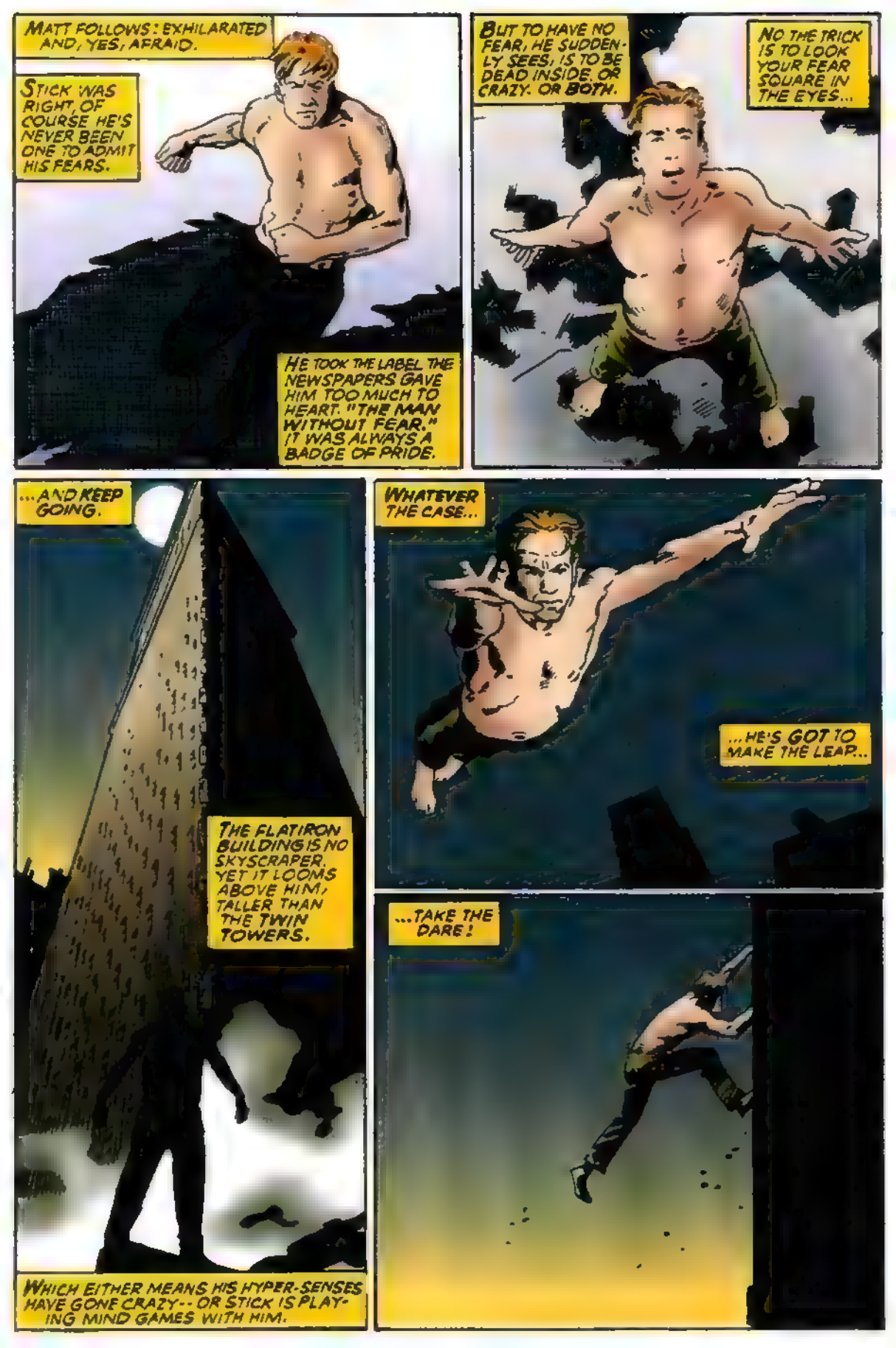
NOT NOW.
HE DID IT.
TOLD HER EVERYTHING ALL THE GUILT, ALL THE SHAME, DRAGGED INTO THE LIGHT.
HE TOLD HER...
...AND SHE ACCEPTED IT. ACCEPTED HIM.
WHAT A GIFT, HE THINKS. WHAT A HEALING.
HE EVEN FOUND THE COURAGE TO CONFESS HIS DARKEST GUILT, HIS DEEPEST SHAME: THE PROSTITUTE... THE GIRL... WHO DIED, SO LONG AGO. WHO HE— HOWEVER INADVERTENTLY— KILLED. AND KAREN ACCEPTED HIM.
BUT THIS, MATT REALIZES, IS JUST THE FIRST STEP. IT'S WONDERFUL, SAFE AND WARM, HERE IN KAREN'S ARMS, IN KAREN'S BED. BUT HIS ANSWER, HIS EXPIATION...

...IS OUT THERE.

HE CASTS HIS HYPER-SENSES OUT LIKE A NET ACROSS THE CITY--SIFTING THROUGH SCENTS AND SOUNDS FOR THE SMALLEST HINT OF HIS TEACHER.
STICK!
ARE YOU THERE?
ARE YOU REAL?
BUT HOW, HE MUSES, DO I FIND ONE OF THE CHASTE? HOW DO I TRACK A MYSTIC WARRIOR WHO WAS DANCING THROUGH SHADOWS BEFORE I WAS BORN?
ANSWER ME, DAMMIT! ANSWER--
BOO.
--ME.
HEY--DON'T TELL ME I SCARED "THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR."
NOT SCARED JUST... STARTLED.
Y'NEVER COULD ADMIT IT WHEN YOU WERE AFRAID, COULD YOU? IT'S NOTHING T'BE ASHAMED OF, Y'KNOW. I'D BE, TOO--

--IF I'D JUST SEEN A GHOST.
GHOST? WHAT DO YOU--?
YOU SAID IT YOURSELF BEFORE: YOU SAW ME DIE.
SO EITHER I AM A GHOST... OR I'M LAZARUS-- RISEN FROM THE GRAVE.
THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR, ISN'T IT? SOMEONE TO SHOUT "COME FORTH"-- AND LEAD YOU OUT OF THAT TOMB YOU WALLED YOURSELF UP IN?
OR ARE YOU JUST TRYING T'RUN AWAY--
--LIKE YOU USED TO DO?
RUN AWAY? I NEVER--
SURE YOU DID
EVERY NIGHT YOU'D SLIP OUT THE WINDOW WHILE YOUR OLD MAN WAS SNORING ON THE COUCH--
--AND YOU'D RUN LIKE THE DEVIL.
YOU THOUGHT THAT'S WHAT BEING MY STUDENT WAS ALL ABOUT. LEAVING MATT MURDOCK AS FAR BEHIND AS YOU COULD.

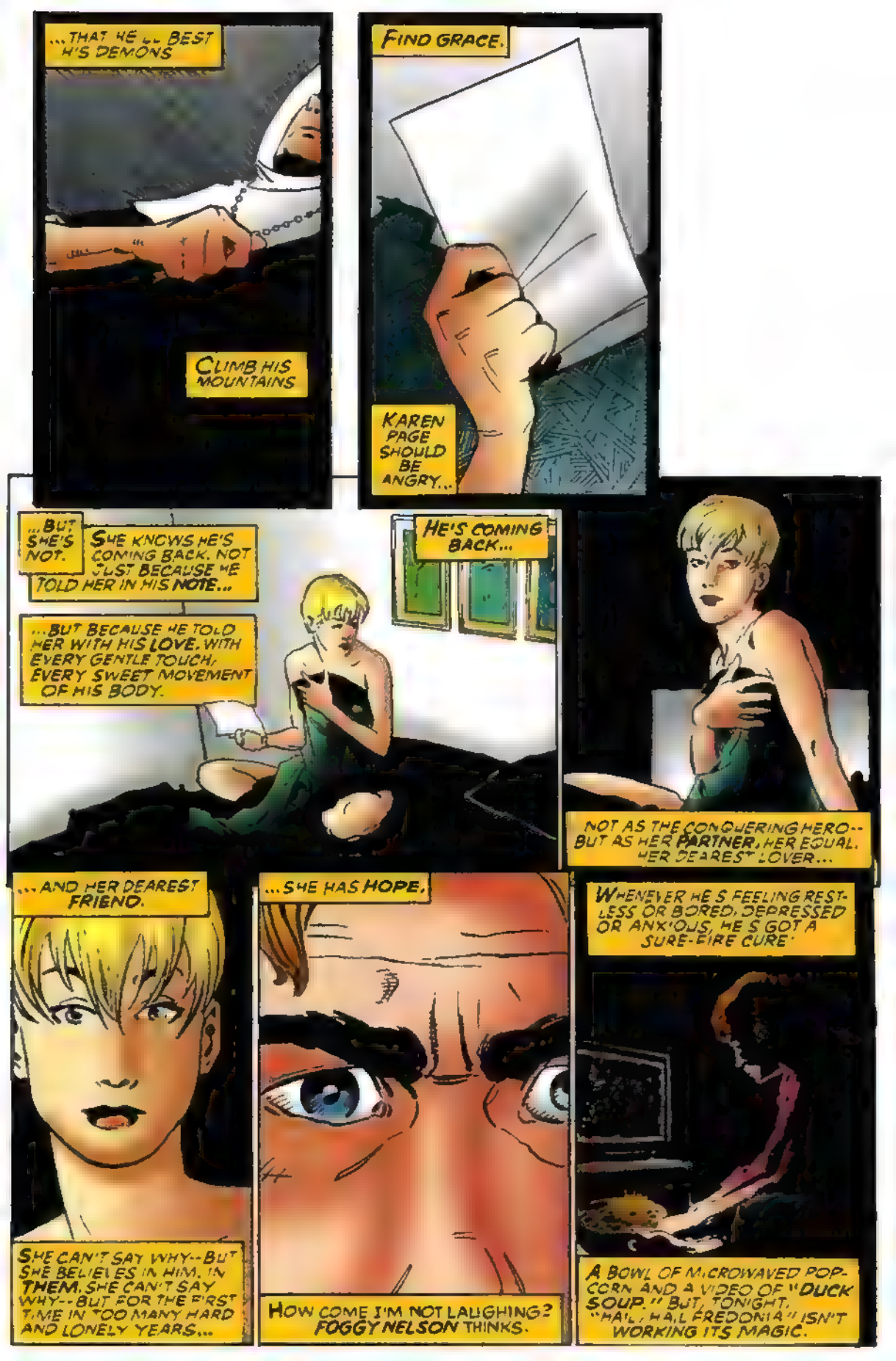
SHEDDING HIM-- AND EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING IN HIS LIFE-- LIKE A SNAKE-SKIN.
YOU WERE BURYING MURDOCK YEARS BEFORE "JACK BATLIN" CAME ALONG.
BUT Y'KNOW WHAT, EINSTEIN?
YOU HAD IT ALL WRONG.
I WASN'T TRYING TO TAKE YOU AWAY FROM MURDOCK.
I WAS TRYING TO DRAG YOU TO HIM.
I WAS TRYING TO MAKE YOU A MAN.
YOU DIDN'T GET IT THEN. THINK I CAN POUND IT INTO THAT THICK HEAD NOW?
IT'S YOUR CALL, COUNSELOR. YOU WANNA STAY DOWN IN THAT GRAVE--
--OR CLIMB UP TO HEAVEN?


MATT FOLLOWS: EXHILARATED AND, YES, AFRAID.
STICK WAS RIGHT, OF COURSE HE'S NEVER BEEN ONE TO ADMIT HIS FEARS.
HE TOOK THE LABEL THE NEWSPAPERS GAVE HIM TOO MUCH TO HEART. "THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR." IT WAS ALWAYS A BADGE OF PRIDE.
BUT TO HAVE NO FEAR, HE SUDDENLY SEES, IS TO BE DEAD INSIDE. OR CRAZY. OR BOTH.
NO THE TRICK IS TO LOOK YOUR FEAR SQUARE IN THE EYES...
...AND KEEP GOING.
THE FLATIRON BUILDING IS NO SKYSCRAPER. YET IT LOOMS ABOVE HIM, TALLER THAN THE TWIN TOWERS.
WHICH EITHER MEANS HIS HYPER-SENSES HAVE GONE CRAZY-- OR STICK IS PLAYING MIND GAMES WITH HIM.
WHATEVER THE CASE...
...HE'S GOT TO MAKE THE LEAP...
...TAKE THE DARE!

Y'WANNA GET OUT OF THE GRAVE, KID... YOU GOTTA CLIMB LIKE YOU NEVER CLIMBED BEFORE
YOU GOTTA SWEAT AND CLAW, STRUGGLE AND BLEED, IF YOU'RE GONNA MAKE IT INTO--
--HEAVEN.
HEAVEN? AN ICY HELL IS MORE LIKE IT.
THE WIND IS BRUTALLY NUMBING, THE AIR BITTER COLD. HIS FINGERS DIG DEEP INTO CRUSTED SNOW.
MATT KNOWS THIS ISN'T REAL: IT CAN'T BE. AND YET, PARADOXICALLY, HE FEELS, TO THE BOTTOM OF HIS SOUL, THAT HE'S REALLY THERE, ACROSS THE WORLD...
...ON THE FABLED MOUNTAIN THAT LEADS TO THE CHASTE'S HIDDEN RETREAT.
FEELS, TOO, THAT WITH EACH CAREFUL STEP, HE'S CLIMBING THE HEIGHTS OF HIS OWN SOUL.

HEIGHTS THAT HAVE BEEN DENIED HIM NOT BY FATE...
...BUT BY HIS OWN NATURE.
EVEN AS A GUST OF WIND CARRIES HIM AWAY, EVEN AS HE STRUGGLES NOT TO FALL TO DEPTHS REAL OR IMAGINED...
...HE SEES HIMSELF WITH NEW EYES:
OTHER MEN, MATT REALIZES, MAY HAVE INSTINCTS THAT DRIVE THEM TO DECENCY. NO MATTER HOW FAR YOU PUSH THEM, THEY'LL INEVITABLY--ALMOST UNCONSCIOUSLY--DO THE RIGHT THING.
CLING TO THE GOOD.
BUT HIS OWN INSTINCT HAS ALWAYS BEEN FAR MORE... RECKLESS.
HE'S ALWAYS LOVED THE LEAP. THE DARE. THE DEVIL IN THE DARKNESS
HE'S HAD TO STRUGGLE AGAINST HIS NATURE TO REACH FOR THE HIGHER GROUND.
AND MAYBE, HE THINKS, JUST MAYBE...
...THAT'S WHAT MAKES A HERO.
NOT THE SELFLESS ACT OF A SELFLESS MAN; BUT THE SELFLESS ACT OF A SELFISH MAN.
A MAN WHO LOVES THE FALL...

...BUT CHOOSES THE CLIMB, NONETHELESS.
HE GREW UP HERE, SISTER MAGGIE THINKS...
...WITHOUT ME.
SHE WAS NEVER FAR AWAY; BUT THE TRUTH IS SHE WAS NEVER CLOSE ENOUGH, EITHER.
HIS FATHER TRIED--MORE THAN MOST MEN WOULD EVER TRY--TO HELP MATT TO LIFT HIM UP, ABOVE THE STINK AND VIOLENCE OF THESE HELL'S KITCHEN STREETS.
BUT JACK MURDOCK WAS A MAN STRUGGLING MIGHTILY WITH HIS OWN DEMONS. HOW DO YOU RAISE ANOTHER SOUL OUT OF HELL, SHE THINKS, WHEN YOU'RE TRAPPED THERE YOURSELF?
NO, MATT STRUGGLED ALONE. HIS TRIUMPHS WERE HIS OWN
AND HIS FAILURES?
THEY WERE JACK'S.
AND HERS.
*LAST ISSUE. --James
NOW, AS SHE TOLD MATT WHEN HE CAME TO HER IN THE CHURCH*... HE'S BEYOND HER HELP.
BUT NOT BEYOND GOD'S.
SO SHE PRAYS, WITH ALL HER HEART, FOR THE LITTLE BOY... THE TROUBLED TEENAGER... THE TORMENTED MAN. AND, EVEN AS SHE PRAYS, SHE KNOWS (OR AT LEAST SHE BELIEVES)...


...THAT HE ... BEST H'S DEMONS
CLIMB HIS MOUNTAINS
FIND GRACE.
KAREN PAGE SHOULD BE ANGRY...
...BUT SHE'S NOT.
SHE KNOWS HE'S COMING BACK. NOT JUST BECAUSE HE TOLD HER IN HIS NOTE...
...BUT BECAUSE HE TOLD HER WITH HIS LOVE. WITH EVERY GENTLE TOUCH, EVERY SWEET MOVEMENT OF HIS BODY.
HE'S COMING BACK...
NOT AS THE CONQUERING HERO-- BUT AS HER PARTNER, HER EQUAL, HER DEAREST LOVER...
...AND HER DEAREST FRIEND.
SHE CAN'T SAY WHY--BUT SHE BELIEVES IN HIM. IN THEM. SHE CAN'T SAY WHY--BUT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN TOO MANY HARD AND LONELY YEARS...
...SHE HAS HOPE.
HOW COME I'M NOT LAUGHING? FOGGY NELSON THINKS.
WHENEVER HE'S FEELING RESTLESS OR BORED, DEPRESSED OR ANXIOUS, HE'S GOT A SURE-FIRE CURE.
A BOWL OF MICROWAVED POPCORN AND A VIDEO OF "DUCK SOUP." BUT, TONIGHT, "HAIL, HAIL FREDONIA" ISN'T WORKING ITS MAGIC.

HE CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT MATT. HIS BEST FRIEND.
A BEST FRIEND WHO LIED TO FOGGY. DECEIVED HIM
HE STILL CAN'T BELIEVE IT: MATT WAS DAREDEVIL... IS DAREDEVIL!
WHY COULDN'T MATT TELL HIM? TRUST HIM? HE CERTAINLY HAD NO PROBLEM TELLING KAREN THE TRUTH!
WHAT KIND OF FRIEND LIVES A LIE LIKE THAT-- TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY? FOR THAT MATTER...
...WHAT KIND OF FRIEND LETS THE PEOPLE WHO LOVE HIM BELIEVE HE'S DEAD? LETS THEIR HEARTS BREAK?
LETS THEM MOURN?
SO MANY YEARS TOGETHER! BUSINESS PARTNERS. BUDDIES. FAMILY. SO MANY YEARS-- AND YOU THINK YOU KNOW A PERSON.
WHEN ALL YOU REALLY KNOW...
...IS A MASK.
HE'S STARTING TO LOSE THE FEELING IN HIS HANDS.
HIS LUNGS ARE BURNING FROM THE COLD.
BUT MATT MURDOCK KEEPS CLIMBING...
...AND HE WON'T STOP...
...UNTIL HE REACHES...

...THE SUMMIT.
WHAT THE DEVIL IS GOING ON HERE?!
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MOUNTAIN?
WHAT MOUNTAIN?
STOP PLAYING GAMES WITH ME, STICK!
LIFE'S A GAME, KID. AN' YOU'VE GOTTA DETACH YOURSELF FROM ALL YOUR PRE-CONCEPTIONS IN ORDER T'PLAY IT RIGHT.
SPARE ME YOUR ZEN SMOKESCREENS, WILL YOU?
I WANT ANSWERS--
--AND I WANT THEM NOW!
ANSWERS? UH-UH.
WE'RE NOT NEARLY DONE WITH THE QUESTIONS.
SAY GOODNIGHT, GRACIE.
SKRAK

...Uhhhhh...
NOW WHERE WERE WE?
TALKING ABOUT DEATH AND RESURRECTION, RIGHT?
TRUTH IS, YOU'VE DIED AND RESURRECTED YOURSELF MORE TIMES THAN I CAN COUNT.
STICK, WE'VE GOT TO TALK!
NO, NO-- I'VE GOTTA TALK. YOU'VE GOTTA LISTEN.
JACK BATLIN
Y'KNOW, I COULD FILL THIS WHOLE CEMETARY WITH THE PEOPLE YOU'VE BEEN. THE LIVES YOU'VE DISCARDED. THE MASKS YOU'VE WORN.
REMEMBER MIKE MURDOCK? NOW THAT WAS A GOOD ONE.
BUT WHAT SAY WE LIMIT THIS TO A STUDY OF YOUR MAJOR INCARNATIONS.
LOOK BEHIND YOU, KID.
NO!

THIS
IS
IMPOSSIBLE!
MAYBE IT IS. BUT THAT'S NOT GONNA STOP THOSE THREE... IMPOSSIBILITIES--
--FROM TAKING YOU APART!
NORD
NEXT: PURGATORIO
CONCLUDES--AND RON WAGNER RETURNS--IN A DOUBLE-SIZED SHOCKER THAT WILL CHANGE THE COURSE OF D.D. HISTORY! BE HERE FOR DAREDEVIL #350 IN THIRTY DAYS!

BEAST CHARMING
Perenially purveying a plenitude of purty, prettified pictures to my peerless pals!
OCD
is where it's at!
Queries? Requests? Contact me at
BeastCharming@yahoo.com
Pledged to scan all series great and small...